



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

A small commercial plane was carrying only four passengers: a doctor, a trial lawyer, a minister, and a Boy Scout. Suddenly, one of the engines made a loud BANG and started to smoke. A few moments later, the pilot rushed into the main cabin. He had a parachute strapped on his back. He said to his four passengers, "The plane is going down. Unfortunately, there are only four parachutes and there are five of us. I have a wife and three children so I think I should get one of the chutes." With that, he opened the exit door and jumped out of the plane.

The doctor said, "I'm a doctor and I save lives. I need to stay alive so I can help more people." He took one of the remaining chutes, strapped it on and jumped out of the plane. Next, the trial lawyer said, "I'm one of the smartest people alive. I've won hundreds of cases and I deserve one of these chutes!" With that, he strapped a pack on his back and jumped out of the plane.

The minister turned to the young boy and said, "Son, I've lived a long and happy life. I know what awaits me in the life to come and I have no fear of death. You take the last chute and I'll go down with the plane."

The Boy Scout replied, "That's okay, pastor, there's still two parachutes left, one for you and one for me. The smartest man in the world just jumped out of the plane wearing my backpack."

Who's first? The Olympic skier with the Gold Medal. Where do we fit in? Are you the person always in the middle of the conversation? Do we jostle for the best seats. Rodney and I had two sets of friends. Believe it or not. One set had tickets to the Green Bay Packer games that were on the 50-yard line about 10 rows up from the Packers sideline. The other friends seemed to get their hands on free tickets that were nosebleed seats. Who do you think we wanted to go to the game with? The view is definitely better at the 50-yard line. Another question is, where as parents, did you sit

with your children in church. Bet most of you were afraid of sitting in the front row. Rodney and I found that the kids paid better attention in the front row because they could see what was going on and also, they could see the eyes of the pastor on them. So, not sitting in the preferred back row like a good Norwegian was not an option. Maybe you went to Christmas dinner with the extended family and the adults were in the dining room and then, there was the kids table out in the living room. When was it that you finally graduated from the relegation of the kids table?

And then we have an invitation to a wedding. At the banquet, do you go to sit at a place of honor, the head table, or the parents table? Not usually unless it is your wedding or that of your child. You find a seat somewhere else. In our Gospel reading today, Jesus tells a story, a parable about a wedding where someone did take a seat in a place of honor and was asked by the host to move and take a lower seat. How embarrassing that must have been. And then Jesus suggested what we should really do and that is to take a seat of less importance, so if the host wants to honor you, he can ask you to come closer to a better seat. That would of course boost anyone's ego. And the moral of the story is, in verse 11, "For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

There are times that we should sit in the front row and others that we should not. And how do we know that? The next part of Jesus' teaching for today tells us that we should not just invite important people to dinner, having in mind that they will no doubt return the favor, but rather invite those who cannot repay you. Jesus said that "You will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." WOW.

So, we are to follow in Jesus' footsteps by being humble. Jesus did not enter this world riding on a white horse with a white cape and a sharp sword in hand. He came humbly, being born in a barn. He was not the king that was expected. And he died a terrible death on a humble wooden cross. His whole life's story was one of humility. Jesus ate with the tax collectors and healed lepers and blessed everyone no matter their status.

Just for fun I looked up the word humility on dictionary.com. It said having a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, being polite, and having a feeling of subservience. The antonym or opposite was pride, rude, noble, or feeling exalted. You see, Jesus is asking us to do what he would do. You remember the old bracelet that said, "WWJD". What would Jesus do. Jesus wants us to understand how things work in the kingdom of God.

A wonderful show of how God wants us to live humbly in His kingdom is found in Mary's song. The Magnificat. Luke 1:46-53 "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Might One has done great things for me, and Holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thought of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty." God picked a lowly young girl to birth his Son and she was blessed with that honor. She was humbled but accepted her place in History as the mother of God himself. The kingdom of God became her reality. And she lived to see her Son save all of creation, with his death, burial, and resurrection. This gave her, as well as us, the promise of eternal life with God in heaven one day. Mary was one of the greatest humble servants.

God is calling all of us to share his kingdom values, including the one we are talking about here today, humility. We need to let our worldly self go and to seek to please God rather than other people. Rev. Dr. Marion Soards said it will, "True godliness is a reckless investment in the parts of the world that beg for attention in real need but that show no potential of paying back dividends. Yet Jesus promises that God sees, and that God will pay the interest on an investment in the vulnerable elements of humankind."

Rather interesting that we just finished the dinner and discussion meetings here at Christ the Servant. And from what I have heard there were excellent discussions about many aspects of life here at this church. All this info will be gathered and discussed in addition to the survey that we will take starting next week. Certainly, a learning lesson for us as we talked about the how we can be church together in God's kingdom right here on earth. Maybe we need to have more dinners and continue the discussion as to what our ministry will look like once I am retired and who will be your new pastor, leading you to be the feet and hands of Jesus in Park Falls, Springstead, and beyond. In our world today the thought of following Jesus or living in His kingdom are all too foreign to most. We need to change that around, not by seeking our own importance as the best, the brightest, the prettiest or the richest. Rather by humbly serving those that are less fortunate than we are. We remember Jesus' warning, "for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Powerful verse 11.

So, I ask you, where is your place at the banquet table? Are you secure, do you feel that you belong, that you matter? Do you feel that you are a valued person, for who you are, just as you are? The banquet that we will partake of together in just a few minutes is for you. I hope you come with a humble heart knowing what Christ has done for you. It is a banquet of abundance for all. There are few things as distressing as the feeling that you don't belong, that you're unwanted and unimportant. But our God is a God of love and mercy, and you are important. Don't ever forget that Jesus Loves You. We do not have to try to prove that to the world and to ourselves that we are the best and brightest. God knows who we are.

I encourage you to shut out the noise of the world and listen to each other, build up the kingdom of God where everyone is included and is important. Find your place here at CTS and enjoy the abundant life that God is wanting for you. There is no question who you are or whose you are. I hope you know your place, your REAL place, and you accept it with humility. Jesus tells us that we do not need to jockey for position. We can let go of the unceasing pursuit or angling for always having to be the best. We can let it go because our seat is already secure! You are already God's beloved. There is nothing you have to do or not do to safeguard your position. Whether you were born in a palace or in a barn, you were born belonging to Christ. You were made in the image of the creator. You were claimed by Christ at your baptism when the minister marked you with the cross of Christ, forever! And Jesus saved you on the cross with His death and resurrection.

No one can change that, no words, no alternate perception of reality, no earthly forces, no polarized politics, nothing in all of creation can change this truth, you are precious to God! This is who you are, this is your value, your place, and don't let anyone tell you any differently! Accept with humility all that God has done for you.

AMEN